



Tips for Grandparents *who are* Raising Grandchildren in Illinois

These simple suggestions have been developed by the Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Illinois to assist older adult caregivers in their efforts to provide quality care for their family's children. The Task Force can be reached through the Illinois Department on Aging's toll-free Senior HelpLine, **1-800-252-8966** (Voice and TTY).

Is Your Child Ready to Stay Alone?

There is no specific age when children are ready to stay home alone because children mature at different rates. It is most important to know if your children feel comfortable being home alone and have the levelheadedness to handle an emergency.

Some states have laws regulating the age at which children may be left home alone. You can find out what the law is where you live by calling the agency that oversees services for children and families.

Build up hours gradually by leaving your children briefly to run an errand or arranging to arrive home fifteen minutes later than usual from work. Ask your children if they felt comfortable and what they did with their time. Encourage them to tell you of any fears they may have no matter how trivial.

Prepare your child to be ready for emergency situations. Go over the following together:

1. Their full name, address and phone number.
2. Your full name and the address and phone number at your job.
3. The name and phone number of your designated backup person.
4. The phone number for emergency services.
5. Not to enter your home if a door or window is open or broken.
6. What to do if someone knocks on the door.
7. The location of a flashlight in good working order if the power should fail.
8. How to exit your home quickly in case of a fire.
9. The safety rules and routines of your home.
10. Review basic first aid procedures and put together a first aid kit.

Consider your child's maturity level and their ability to handle a variety of situations. *If you answer "yes" to most of the following questions, this may indicate your child is ready to stay alone.*

- ☐ Has he/she handled brief periods of being left alone well?
- ☐ Will he/she come straight home after school?
- ☐ Will he/she be lonely or frightened by himself/herself?
- ☐ Can he/she manage simple jobs like fixing a snack and taking phone messages?
- ☐ Is he/she physically able to unlock and lock the doors at home?
- ☐ Can he/she solve small problems himself/herself?
- ☐ Does he/she know when and how to seek outside help?
- ☐ Is he/she prepared to handle an accident or an emergency?
- ☐ Will he/she follow the rules set for him/her and use his/her time productively?

Steps you can take to ease your worries and help protect your child while you're not around.

- ✓ Sit down with him/her and go over the rules of your home including what to do if a stranger comes to the door or if friends want to come over.
- ✓ Decide together what kinds of snacks are allowed and how much.
- ✓ Decide what things are "off limits" until a parent is home, and how time will be spent.

Excerpt taken from "The Daily Parent" prepared by the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL AGENCIES.

For more information, call:

Illinois Department on Aging's Senior HelpLine
1-800-252-8966
(Voice and TTY)